

Viewing The Centennial

by U. C. P.

The following is the first of two installments of Utah history prepared by L. C. Montgomery, chairman of the historical division of the county centennial committee.

As chairman of the History Department of the Wasatch County Centennial Committee, I am writing this article for publication on the early history of the State and of Wasatch County. It is hoped that such an article will assist the people who read it to better understand and appreciate the Centennial celebration that we are commencing. I will divide the article into two parts, first the history of the State and secondly the early history of Wasatch county. Regarding the history of the State, I will confine my article to the history of Utah prior to the time the Mormon pioneers came here in 1847, since everybody is more or less familiar with the history of the state from that date to the present time. The information I give in this article is largely obtained from history books, records and old journals, and diaries, I have read.

The first inhabitants of Utah were the cliff dwellers who built their homes in the rugged canyons of the Southern part of the state. They apparently came into the state from the south and were of a higher standard of civilization than the other Indians that succeeded them.

The pre-Mormon history of white men in Utah may be divided into three sections: The explorers, the trappers and the early emigrants. The early explorers, were largely Catholic Priests who were either searching for new short-cuts to the Pacific coast or proselyting among the Indians. Cardenas, by somewhat mythical records, is supposed to have entered the southern part of the state in the year of 1540 which was only about 50 years after the discovery of America, and was more than a hundred years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. Baron LaHontan is credited with having visited the state in 1688 and to have given quite an accurate description of the Salt Lake and the bearded Indians of Central Utah. Father Escalante gives us the first detailed description of the surface of Utah and of its Indian inhabitants and animal life. He entered the state near Jensen, Utah, in September, 1776, journeyed westward to Utah Lake and then South to the Colorado River. Up to the turn of the nineteenth century no English speaking people had set foot on Utah territory. In 1809 two Englishmen, Spencer and Workman became lost and in an effort to make their way to California crossed the southern part of the state.

Following 250 years of exploration, largely by the Spanish-speaking people, we come to the end of the 18th century when the English-speaking people took over and began to make their influence felt in the region.

Under Spanish exploitation, horses, crude implements, and weapons were introduced into the territory and quite an extensive slave trade was carried on between the Spaniards, Mexicans and our native Indians, which

The trappers: The explorers came into Utah from the South and West while the trappers came from the North and East. The furs of beaver became the legal tender of the west. General William Ashley and a large group of trappers and scouts came into Utah through Cache valley and discovered the Great Salt Lake. Ashley's men descended the Green River in 1825 and established a trading post in what is now Dagget County. Other early trappers and scouts of the region were Jedediah Smith, Peter Skeen, Ogden, Spaullette, Bridger, Provoat, Campbell, Pechworth, Kit Carson and numerous others.

A group of Ashley's trappers sent the winter of 1824-25 in Cache Valley, which appears to have been the first white men to spend a winter in the state, while the first year-long abode of white men in the state, was at Fort Roubidoux on the Uintah River in the Uintah Basin where Antonio Roubidoux in 1832 built a Fort and trading post. This fort was also known as Fort Uintah or

Wintey. Kit Carson spent several winters there. The Indians raided and burned the fort in 1844.

The first account I can find of women being in the state was in the summer of 1826, when about thirty white men (trappers) with women and children were camped on a creek in what is now Weber County. In the summer of 1826 Ashley's supply train from the United States arrived at the rendezvous in Utah with 300 pack mules laden with trappers supplies and the account says the occasion was celebrated by songs, dancing, target shooting, yarns, trading, jumping and races. "The unpacking of the medicine water contributed not a little to the festivities." There were over 300 trappers present and the place of rendezvous was near the present city of Ogden.

Two days after Ashley's supply train arrived, in 1826, the greatest battle ever fought on Utah soil took place. Several thousand Black Feet Indians from the North attacked Ashley's trappers. The trappers, more than 300 in number, were reinforced by 400 Snake Indian warriors, who were traditional enemies of the Black Feet.

The armies squared off in regular battle formation, the trappers and Snake Indians under the leadership of Captain Sublet. The battle lasted all one day. The Black Feet were defeated and the trappers buried 173 Black Feet Indians not counting hundreds of casualties the Indians had carried away with them.

Horses seemed to be plentiful in Utah almost as far back as the white man's history goes.

John C. Fremont on June 3, 1844 visited Fort Roubidoux and bought some sugar, coffee and a cow, which is the first reference I have ever found of a cow in Utah.

Game did not seem to be too plentiful in Utah in the Pre-Mormon era. Escalante bought 60 pounds of buffalo meat per man from the Indians before attempting to cross Utah. John C. Fremont in June 1844 said they bought some dried meat from the Indians "which was very welcome." Peter Skeen Ogden, traveling across the western part of the state in 1828, said they had to kill three horses for food. Buffalo and elk seemed to be more plentiful than deer. The last buffalo were killed in 1833.

I wonder if you would not be

was on Christmas, 1840. The ground was still bare. There were about 20 people who sat down to the feast. Most of them were Frenchmen who had Indian wives, although one Englishman was present who wrote this narrative. The dinner was held in a large wigwag owned by a Frenchman who had a Nez-Pierce Indian wife and two children. "The first dish served was a large tin pan rounded full of stewed elk meat; the next dish was similar to the first—heaped up with boiled deer meat; and the third and fourth dishes were equal in size to the first containing boiled flour pudding, prepared with dried native fruit accompanied by four quarts of sauce made from service berries and sweetened with sugar. There were some cakes and 6 quarts of strong coffee served from cups and pans while large pieces of bark were used for plates. I think you will be interested in a brief description of the

dians of this state in the pre-Mormon days. The chief tribe, of course, was the Utes, divided into several different casts or clans. The Indians that lived along the Duchesne and Uintah rivers were of a higher intelligence than those that lived around the Utah lake, which were the very lowest cast. These last mentioned Indians were called root-diggers or fish eaters, because they lived largely on fish and roots. This tribe had no guns, poor shelters, and very scant clothing. They were dispersed by the other Indians of the state. Every other tribe abused them. One writer described them as follows: "These creatures have been known, when pressed with hunger to kill and eat their children and to gather crickets and ants and worms, and dry them in the sun and pound them into dust and make a bread out of the same. When traveling they would leave their lame, and blind and old people to perish in the wilderness." William Wolfskill in 1830 described the Indians of this vicinity as follows: "They had but few words. Their communication was by signs. These people are apparently the lowest species of humanity. Nothing save their up-right form entitles them to the name of man." "Their food was occasionally a rabbit, with roots, mice, insects, flies, and worms. They would grow fat on a patch of clover and east grass often like cattle. When lice covered their bodies, they appropriated them for food."

First in the West.

Utah Pioneer Settlers Began Irrigation

(Submitted by Elaine B. Fairbanks)

in West

The early settlers of the Great Salt Lake Valley were principally dependent upon the future this valley offered as an agricultural area. One of their first tasks was to prepare land for planting.

Their attempts at plowing were halted by the extreme hardness of the land which broke several plow points. To overcome this condition a dam was placed in the nearby stream (City Creek) and water was diverted to soak the land. In a day or two several acres had been planted.

Bancroft's history of Utah tells us that the ground was dedicated by Orson Pratt and that the Lord's blessings were asked upon seeds planted. He also tells us that "potatoes and several other vegetables" were the first crop planted.

Planting the first crop is in itself very significant, but the method of irrigation was a new principle that before this time had been used only in small

vegetables and flower gardens. It began the development of an irrigation system that made productive many thousands of acres of land that otherwise would have been considered useless.

Utah has furnished expert irrigation directors to many foreign countries and the "Mormon" pioneers can claim credit for beginning a practice of crop watering that has revolutionized agricultural endeavor.

The first crops planted did not yield a very large harvest because the season was so far along.

However, some potatoes about the size of peas or walnuts were harvested and used for seed the following year.

While a form of irrigation had been practiced by agriculturists since ancient times, the Mormons demonstrated to the world that it could be done cooperatively and scientifically to the benefit of the land.

Thus the first crop planted in the Salt Lake Valley introduced cooperative, scientific irrigation to the world.



DRY LAND NEEDED WATER—The first company of pioneers to arrive in Salt Lake Valley watered the dry land in preparation for planting. The picture, by

John B. Fairbanks, represents these pioneers preparing the ditch for irrigation. It hung in the Chicago "Century of Progress" World's Fair Exposition in 1933.